

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0229

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 4343

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, VT, VS

SUBJECT: POPE'S CONCERN FOR VIETNAM REFUGEES

FROM LODGE

1. CARDINAL VILLOT, THE PAPAL SECRETARY OF STATE, WHO RANKS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE POPE IN THE VATICAN ORDER OF PRECEDENCE, AND WHO HAD INDICATED THAT HE WANTED TO SEE ME, GAVE ME THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE WHICH HE SAID HAD COME DIRECTLY FROM THE POPE AT HIS MEETING WITH THE POPE THIS MORNING:

2. THE POPE WAS DEEPLY WORRIED BY THE LACK OF TRANSPORT FOR THE REFUGEES IN VIETNAM. HE WAS CONVINCED THAT THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES COULD NOT PROVIDE THE TRANSPORT WHICH WAS NECESSARY. HE WAS SPEAKING FROM A STRICTLY HUMANITARIAN POINT OF VIEW AND WITH NO THOUGHT OF BECOMING INVOLVED IN POLITICAL OR MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS. HE WOULD DEEPLY APPRECIATE WHATEVER THE US COULD DO.

3. IN ANOTHER CONVERSATION, ARCHBISHOP CASAROLI SAID THAT THE LACK OF TRANSPORT FOR REFUGEES WAS "A TRAGEDY" AND WAS OF THE LIVELIEST CONCERN TO THE VATICAN. THE GERMAN PRIEST, MSGR. HUSSERL, WAS ON HIS WAY TO VIETNAM; THE ACTIVITIES OF THE GERMAN CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION, CARITAS, WERE BEING STEPPED UP AS WERE THOSE

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OF "MISEROER," THE ORGANIZATION SPECIFICALLY AIMED TO COMBAT

HUNGER. IF THE US COULD HELP IN ANY WAY, THE CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES WERE READY TO COLLABORATE. HE SAID HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT THE RED CROSS WOULD DO.

4. I DREW ON STATE 66730 IN RESPONSE TO THIER INTEREST IN THE VIETNAM SITUATION. WHEN I FINISHED THE PRESENTATION TO CASAROLI, HE REPEATED WHAT I HAD SAID TO HIM PRACTICALLY VERBATIM.

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